

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

For

**WAVEGUIDE-BASED BRAGG GRATINGS WITH SPECTRAL
SIDELOBE SUPPRESSION AND METHOD THEREOF**

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Attorney's Docket No.: 42P14583D

"Express Mail" mailing label number: EV320117616US

Date of Deposit: April 9, 2004

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WAVEGUIDE-BASED BRAGG GRATINGS WITH SPECTRAL SIDELOBE
SUPPRESSION AND METHOD THEREOF

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a Divisional Application of co-pending U.S. Patent Application No. 10/188,016 filed on July 1, 2002. The present application is related to U.S. Patent Application No. 09/881,218 filed June 13, 2001.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Embodiments of invention relate generally to optical devices and, more specifically but not exclusively relate to Bragg grating optical devices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[0003] Transmission bandwidth demands in telecommunication networks (e.g., the Internet) appear to be ever increasing and solutions are being sought to support this bandwidth demand. One solution to problem is to use optical networks, where wavelength-division-multiplexing (WDM) technology is used to support the ever-growing demand for higher data rates. Commonly used optical components include Bragg gratings.

[0004] Bragg gratings can be implemented in optical fibers (i.e., also known as fiber Bragg gratings or FBGs) or in integrated circuits (i.e., also known as

waveguide Bragg gratings or WBGs). WBGs are considered to be one of the key components for future WDM systems and networks.

[0005] WBGs are typically realized as surface corrugated grating structures. Typical surface corrugated WBGs have relatively large spectral sidelobes. Conventional solutions to reduce spectral sidelobes in surface corrugated WBGs include using e-beam lithography to form cascaded uniform gratings, each uniform grating having a different fixed duty-cycle. However, e-beam lithography is relatively costly and complex.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] Non-limiting and non-exhaustive embodiments of the present invention are described with reference to the following figures, wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the various views unless otherwise specified.

[0007] Figure 1 is a diagram illustrating a waveguide Bragg grating (WBG), according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0008] Figure 2 is a diagram illustrating the width variation of one layer of material along a WBG, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0009] Figures 3A-3C are graphs respectively illustrating simulated reflection spectra of a 1000 period WBG with no apodization, twenty step apodization according to an embodiment of the present invention, and one thousand step apodization according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0010] Figure 4 is a diagram illustrating a cross-sectional view of an apodized WBG according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0011] Figure 5 illustrating a perspective view of an apodized WBG according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0012] Figure 6 is a diagram illustrating a WDM optical communication system using a WBG according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0013] Embodiments of the present invention are directed to apparatus and systems (and methods thereof) having a grating structure that includes a substrate and several regions formed in the substrate. The regions are formed so as to have refractive indices that are different from that of the substrate. In one embodiment, the grating structure is formed of multiple concatenated grating sections, each with a different grating pitch. Each grating section has grating periods with substantially constant pitch, with each grating period including one of the regions. The width of the regions varies among the grating periods, thereby varying the duty cycles of the grating periods. The duty cycle variation can be used to advantageously control the apodization of each of the grating section structure. Several embodiments of the present invention are described below.

[0014] Figure 1 illustrates a waveguide Bragg grating (WBG), according to one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, WBG 101 is formed in a substrate 103, with several regions 105 formed along a waveguide 125. In some embodiments, regions 105 are filled trenches, with the fill material having a refractive index different from that of the material of substrate 103. For example, in one embodiment, substrate 103 is crystalline silicon of a silicon wafer, with regions 105 being polysilicon material. In other embodiments, different materials can be used for substrate 103 and regions 105, provided the selected materials have different refractive indices.

[0015] Waveguide 125 implements an optical path 117, represented in Figure 1 as a double headed arrow. In this embodiment, trenches 105 are formed to be substantially perpendicular to optical path 117. The trenches are formed in substrate 103 using standard photolithographic processes and, in one embodiment, the polysilicon is formed in the trenches using a suitable deposition technique such as, for example, low pressure chemical vapor deposition (LPCVD). In addition, the structure can be formed using one mask. In contrast, the e-beam technology (described in the aforementioned apodized surface corrugated WBGs) is significantly more complex and typically requires more than one mask. In other embodiments, regions 105 may be formed by doping regions 105 to alter the regions' refractive indices.

[0016] In accordance with this embodiment of the present invention, regions 105 are formed so as to apodize WBG 101 by selectively varying the width of a region 105 within each grating period of all of the grating periods of WBG 101. In addition, the pitch of each grating period is substantially uniform (*i.e.*, a fixed or constant pitch) across WBG 101. The rest of the grating period is formed by the intervening area of substrate 103 (*i.e.*, the area of substrate 103 between the grating period's region 105 and the region 105 of the next grating period). The term "duty cycle" is used herein to refer to the percentage of a grating period that the width of the region 105 occupies (with the remaining percentage of the pitch corresponding to the width of the intervening area of substrate 103. Thus, in this embodiment, WBG 101 is apodized by varying the duty cycle from one grating to another while keeping the grating pitch fixed or constant. Although small variations in the grating

pitch may be present in the WBG, in this embodiment the average grating pitch for should be "centered" on the desired Bragg wavelength.

[0017] In a further refinement, the regions 105 can be formed so that the region of each grating period alternates between increasing and decreasing in width from one end of the WBG to the other. For example, the widths of regions 105 in the grating periods on either side of a particular grating period (*i.e.*, adjacent grating periods) would both be smaller (or both greater) than the duty cycle of that grating period. This alternating duty cycle arrangement can facilitate a substantially constant Bragg wavelength over all areas of the WBG. One embodiment of such an alternating arrangement is described below in conjunction with Figure 2.

[0018] In operation, an optical beam 119 is propagated along optical path 117 through waveguide 125. The interfaces between the alternating regions 105 and substrate 103 in the optical path result in periodic or quasi-periodic perturbations in the effect refractive index along optical path 117. These perturbations cause multiple reflections of portions of optical beam 119. When the Bragg condition is satisfied, wavelength components of optical beam 119 having a Bragg wavelength will be reflected by WBG 101 (indicated by an arrow 121 in Figure 1). Conversely, wavelength components of optical beam 119 having non-Bragg wavelengths will propagate through WBG 101 (indicated by an arrow 123 in Figure 1).

[0019] Figure 2 is a diagram illustrating the width variation of regions 105 along propagation path 117 of WBG 101, according to one embodiment of the present invention. In this exemplary embodiment, WBG 101 is formed from one

hundred grating periods that have one of twenty duty cycles (*i.e.*, twenty steps). The example of Figure 2 illustrates the width (or pitch) of regions 105 that are formed as polysilicon-filled trenches in a crystalline silicon substrate 103. Further, the grating period is about 2.0 μm in this embodiment, with the width of regions 105 having an average value of about 1 μm .

[0020] As shown in Figure 2, at one end of WBG 101, the grating period has a polysilicon region 105 with a width of about 1.10 μm . In the next adjacent grating period, the polysilicon region 105 has a width of about 0.90 μm . In this example, a total of about fourteen grating periods have polysilicon region widths alternating between 1.10 μm and 0.90 μm . These two polysilicon widths represent two of the twenty steps. The next group of six grating periods alternate between 1.08 μm and 0.92 μm steps. Thus, the step "range" of this group of grating periods narrows from the previous group of grating periods. The next thirty grating periods have groups of alternating steps with eight narrowing step ranges (*i.e.*, from about 1.07 μm to about 1.01 μm). The next fifty grating periods have ten groups of expanding step ranges, which are arranged in the "mirror image" of the first fifty grating periods. This configuration is designed to achieve a peak Bragg wavelength of about 1551 nanometers. In other embodiments, the WBG can be implemented with a different number of steps and with a different grating period.

[0021] Figures 3A-3C are graphs respectively illustrating simulated reflection spectra (as a function of wavelength) of WBGs having no apodization, twenty step apodization as in Figure 2, and one thousand step apodization using variable duty cycle fixed grating pitch apodization. The worst-case grating extinction ratio is

defined as the reflectance ratio (in dB) of the peak Bragg wavelength to the peak of the first side-lobe. As shown in Figure 3A (*i.e.*, no apodization), the simulated extinction ratio is less than 15 dB. With twenty step apodization according to the embodiment of Figure 2, the extinction ratio is about 35 dB. With one thousand step apodization, the extinction ratio improves to about 40 dB.

[0022] Figures 4 and 5 illustrate cross-sectional and perspective views of WBG 101 (Figure 1), according to one embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, WBG 101 is disposed in substrate 103, which is a semiconductor such as crystalline silicon, with polysilicon regions 105. It is appreciated that silicon and polysilicon are example materials provided for explanation purposes and that other semiconductor materials including III-V semiconductor materials or the like may be utilized in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. As shown, a plurality of regions of polysilicon regions 105 are disposed in silicon semiconductor substrate 103 such that periodic or quasi-periodic perturbations in an effective index of refraction n_{eff} are provided along optical path 117 through substrate 103.

[0023] In one embodiment in which silicon and polysilicon are utilized, having effective refractive indices of n_{Si} and n_{poly} , respectively, a relatively small effective refractive index difference Δn_{eff} (*or* $n_{\text{poly}} - n_{\text{Si}}$) is provided at each interface between substrate 103 and regions 105. In one embodiment, Δn_{eff} is approximately within the range of 0.005 to 0.01. It is appreciated that other value ranges for Δn_{eff} may be utilized in other embodiments of the present invention and that 0.005 to 0.01 is provided herewith for explanation purposes.

[0024] In a further refinement, Δn_{eff} can be changed by performing/controlling an annealing process on the polysilicon of regions 105. For example, in one embodiment, regions 105 are formed by filling the trenches with amorphous silicon (α -Si) and then annealing the α -Si to form polysilicon. The refractive index of the resulting polysilicon (n_{poly}) can depend on the annealing process. Thus, by appropriately controlling the annealing process to control n_{poly} , Δn_{eff} can be controlled.

[0025] Referring to Figure 4, in this embodiment, substrate 103 is implemented as part of a silicon-on-insulator (SOI) wafer. In one embodiment, an insulating layer 407 is implemented as a buried oxide layer using known SOI processes. As a result, insulating layer 407 is disposed between silicon substrate 103 and the rest of the silicon substrate, indicated as substrate layer 413 in Figure 4.

[0026] In this embodiment, an additional insulating layer 409 is formed on substrate 103 such that substrate 103 is disposed between insulating layers 407 and 409. Insulating layer 409 can be formed on the SOI wafer using standard deposition or low-temperature oxidation processes. In one embodiment, insulating layers 407 and 409 include an oxide material or the like. As a result, waveguide 125 is implemented in substrate 103 with cladding provided by insulating layers 407 and 409.

[0027] In this embodiment, waveguide 125 is a rib waveguide, shown as rib waveguide 525 in Figure 5. As shown, the rib waveguide 525 includes a rib

region 527 and a slab region 529. In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 5, the intensity distribution of a single mode optical beam propagating through rib waveguide 525 is indicated as region 519. As shown, the intensity distribution of the optical beam is such that the majority of the optical beam propagates through a portion of rib region 527 toward the interior of the rib waveguide 525. In addition, a portion of the optical beam propagates through a portion of slab region 529 toward the interior of rib waveguide 525. As also shown with the intensity distribution of the optical beam, the intensity of the propagating optical beam is vanishingly small at the “upper corners” of rib region 527 as well as the “sides” of slab region 529.

[0028] Referring back to Figure 4, optical beam 119 is directed along optical path 117 into one end of waveguide 125. In one embodiment, optical beam 119 includes infrared or near infrared light and is confined with cladding provided by insulating layers 407 and 409 to remain within waveguide 125 along optical path 117. In this embodiment, optical beam 119 is confined as a result of total internal reflection due to the lower refractive indices of the oxide material of insulating layers 407 and 409 compared to the refractive index of the silicon of substrate 103 and the polysilicon of regions 105.

[0029] In one embodiment, optical beam 119 includes a plurality of wavelengths including for example λ_1 , λ_2 and λ_3 . It is appreciated that although optical beam 119 has been illustrated to include three wavelengths λ_1 , λ_2 and λ_3 in the illustrated example, a different number of wavelengths may be included in optical beam 119 in other embodiments of the present invention.

[0030] As previously described, there are periodic or quasi-periodic perturbations in the effective index of refraction along optical path 117 through waveguide 125. As a result of the effective refractive index difference Δn_{eff} described above, multiple reflections of optical beam 119 occur at the several interfaces between substrate 103 and regions 105 along optical path 117. In this embodiment, a Bragg reflection occurs when a Bragg condition or phase matching condition is satisfied. In particular, for uniform Bragg gratings, when the condition

$$[0031] m\lambda_B = 2n_{\text{eff}}\Lambda, \quad (1)$$

[0032] is satisfied, where m is the diffraction order, λ_B is the Bragg wavelength, n_{eff} is the effective index of the waveguide and Λ is the period of the grating, a Bragg reflection occurs.

[0033] To illustrate, Figure 4 shows a Bragg condition existing for λ_B equal to λ_2 . Accordingly, optical beam 121 including wavelength λ_2 is shown to be reflected back out of waveguide 125 out from the end into which optical beam 119 is directed. In addition, the remainder of optical beam 119 continues to propagate along optical path 117 through waveguide 125 such that the remaining wavelengths (e.g. λ_1 and λ_3) are included optical beam 123, which is propagated from the opposite end of waveguide 125. Accordingly, the Bragg wavelength λ_2 is filtered from optical beam 119 and directed out of WBG 101 as optical beam 121.

[0034] In alternative embodiments, WBG 101 can be tunable by adding a heater to control the temperature of substrate 103 and regions 105. More particularly, the indices of refraction of the materials of substrate 103 and 105 can

vary with temperature. By controlling the temperature of substrate 103 and regions 105, the Bragg wavelength can be shifted.

[0035] In other alternative embodiments, the Bragg wavelength can be tuned by applying a modulated electric field to substrate 103 and regions 105 to change the effective refractive indices of substrate 103 and regions 105 (*i.e.*, using the plasma optical effect as described in the aforementioned U.S. Patent Application No. 09/881,218).

[0036] Figure 6 is a diagram illustrating an exemplary optical communication system 600 using a WBG according to an embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, system 600 includes an optical add-drop multiplexer (OADM) 602 having a WBG 604, and an optical signal source 608. In this embodiment, WBG 604 is substantially similar to WBG 101 (Figures 4 and 5).

[0037] In one embodiment, optical signal source 608 provides an optical communications beam or the like on which data is encoded. In the example of Figure 6, optical signal source 608 includes three optical transmitter units providing optical signals of wavelengths λ_1 , λ_2 and λ_3 . In this embodiment, wavelength division multiplexing (WDM) or dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) or the like may be employed with the optical beam such that a different channel is encoded with each of the wavelengths included in the optical beam. In this example, the optical beam is formed by combining the transmitter output using an optical multiplexer and amplifying the resulting signal using an erbium doped fiber amplifier (EDFA). The resulting optical beam is propagated to OADM 602.

[0038] WBG 604 of OADM 602 can then be used to filter out the WBG's Bragg wavelength from the optical beam, as previously described above for WBG 101. For example, WBG 604 can filter out wavelength λ_1 to be directed to an optical receiver, and [An optical transmitter can then add] another signal of wavelength λ_1 can be added to the optical beam outputted from WBG 604 to utilize the λ_1 channel. Other OADM system implementations (not shown) can be present in system 600. In this example system, the optical beam is finally received by a termination unit having an EDFA, an optical demultiplexer and three optical receivers (one for each of wavelengths λ_1 , λ_2 and λ_3).

[0039] Embodiments of method and apparatus for an apodized WBG are described herein. In the above description, numerous specific details are set forth (such as the materials of substrate 103 and regions 105, pitches, duty cycles, number of steps, etc.) to provide a thorough understanding of embodiments of the invention. One skilled in the relevant art will recognize, however, that embodiments of the invention can be practiced without one or more of the specific details, or with other methods, components, materials, etc. In other instances, well-known structures, materials, or operations are not shown or described in detail to avoid obscuring the description.

[0040] Reference throughout this specification to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Thus, the appearances of the phrases "in one embodiment" or "in an embodiment" in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily

all referring to the same embodiment. Furthermore, the particular features, structures, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more embodiments.

[0041] In addition, embodiments of the present description may be implemented not only within a semiconductor chip but also within machine-readable media. For example, the designs described above may be stored upon and/or embedded within machine readable media associated with a design tool used for designing semiconductor devices. Examples include a netlist formatted in the VHSIC Hardware Description Language (VHDL) language, Verilog language or SPICE language. Some netlist examples include: a behavioral level netlist, a register transfer level (RTL) netlist, a gate level netlist and a transistor level netlist. Machine-readable media also include media having layout information such as a GDS-II file. Furthermore, netlist files or other machine-readable media for semiconductor chip design may be used in a simulation environment to perform the methods of the teachings described above.

[0042] Thus, embodiments of this invention may be used as or to support a software program executed upon some form of processing core (such as the CPU of a computer) or otherwise implemented or realized upon or within a machine-readable medium. A machine-readable medium includes any mechanism for storing or transmitting information in a form readable by a machine (e.g., a computer). For example, a machine-readable medium can include such as a read only memory (ROM); a random access memory (RAM); a magnetic disk storage media; an optical storage media; and a flash memory device, etc. In addition, a machine-readable

medium can include propagated signals such as electrical, optical, acoustical or other form of propagated signals (e.g., carrier waves, infrared signals, digital signals, etc.).

[0043] The above description of illustrated embodiments of the invention, including what is described in the Abstract, is not intended to be exhaustive or to be limitation to the precise forms disclosed. While specific embodiments of, and examples for, the invention are described herein for illustrative purposes, various equivalent modifications are possible, as those skilled in the relevant art will recognize.

[0044] These modifications can be made to embodiments of the invention in light of the above detailed description. The terms used in the following claims should not be construed to limit the invention to the specific embodiments disclosed in the specification and the claims. Rather, the scope is to be determined entirely by the following claims, which are to be construed in accordance with established doctrines of claim interpretation.